

State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

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Situation Report for August 16, 2007

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



2007 FIRES

Report Includes:

- Background Information
 - Fire Restrictions & Closures
 - Air Quality
 - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government & Tribal Emergency Operations
- Requests for State Financial Assistance
- Fire Management Assistance Grants
- EMAC Resources Committed
- Summary of State Resources Committed

Important Websites:

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell.

Long Range Predictions

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Area during August. Fuel moisture conditions should improve during the September through November time period except for eastern Montana. In many areas across western Montana and northern Idaho, downed dead woody fuel moistures are drier than normal and Energy Release Component indices are running near or above record levels and well ahead of normal for this time of year. The Climate Prediction Center's forecast calls for above normal temperatures and

below normal precipitation during August, especially over western portions of the Area. Wind events are likely to increase during August as well. Abundant fine fuels are rapidly curing in eastern Montana and will likely increase the probability for large fire problems during August and into the fall months.

Fire Contracting: Inquiries regarding contracting fire equipment and other fire resources should be directed to the interested party's local dispatch center or Geographic Area Coordination Center see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire/nrcg/agree-contract/signup.html>

Fire Restrictions & Closures: Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagel.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagell.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in Effect (for specific areas):

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Air Quality & Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Road Closures & Travel Restrictions: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

[Drought & Fire News](#)

Department of Revenue

<http://mt.gov/revenue/forindividuals/taxrelieffordisaster.asp>

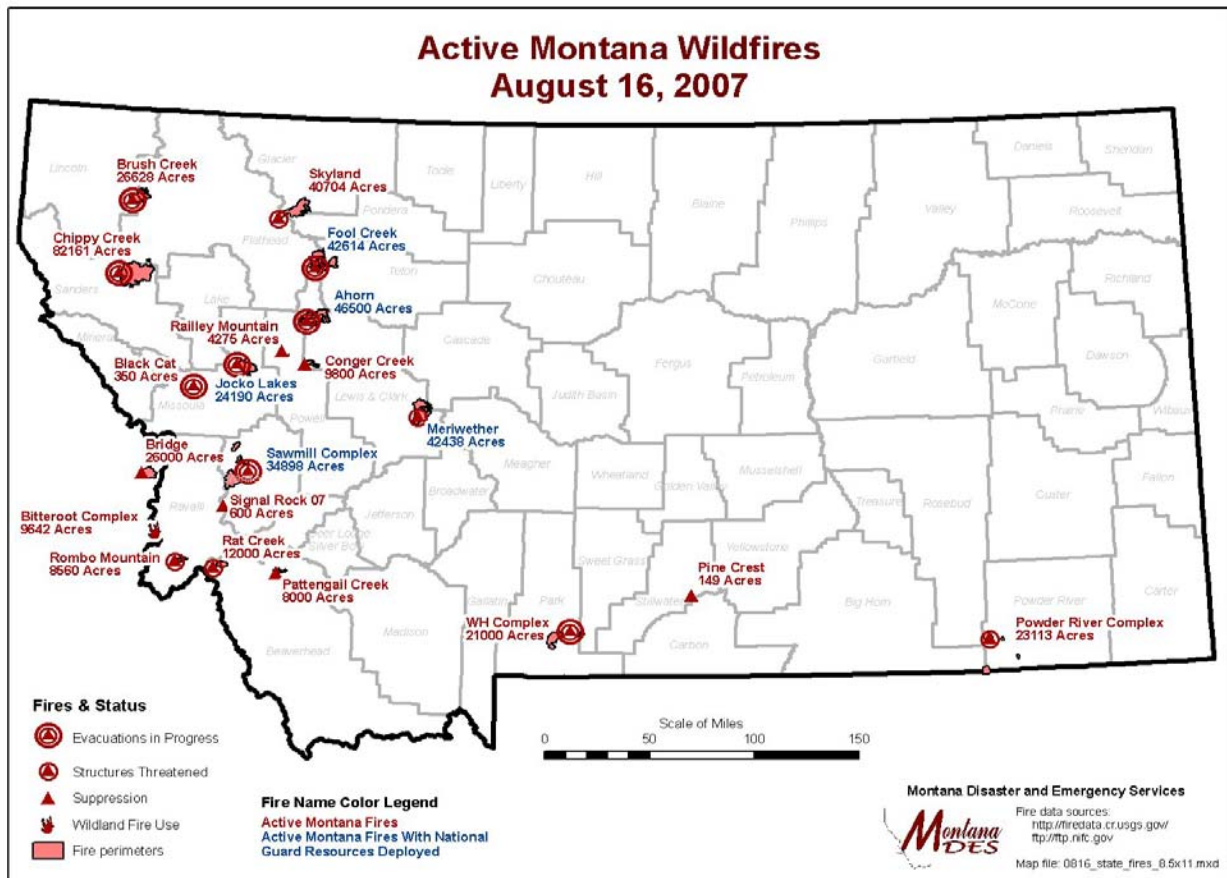
Department of Agriculture

<http://agr.mt.gov/crops/hayFirst.asp>

II. Current Incident Situation - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority.

(This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment.) We have included a link to fire perimeters for the several of the incidents:

http://dma.mt.gov/des/Fire_Perimeter_Maps.asp.



Currently assigned to Montana incidents are:

Area Command Teams	-	1
Type 1 IMT's	-	6
Type 2 IMT's	-	8
Fire Use Management Teams	-	3

The Northern Rockies Coordination Center (Missoula) has assigned an Area Command Team (Zimmerman) to help analyze assessments for long duration fires and emerging incidents.

Jocko Lakes started on CSKT lands (Flathead Agency, BIA), twenty-six miles NE of Missoula; 8 miles W of Seeley Lake. Wilcox's Type 1 IMT is in command of the incident. The Jocko Lakes Fire is **24,190 acres** and **15% contained**. Personnel assigned: **983**. Cause: Lightning. Community of Seeley Lake, surrounding area, Pyramid Lumber Mill and cell tower are threatened. Some evacuations (west of Seeley Lake) were lifted. HWY 83 was opened to through traffic. An American Red Cross Shelter is opened at the Bonner Elementary School. Structures (8) have been lost.

A **Fire Information Hotline** has been established at the Missoula County Fire Information Call Center from **9:00 am to 9:00 pm** at: **(406)258-3680**.
A 24 hour recorded message can be found at (406) 258-4271.

Chippy Creek, is located forty-two miles southwest of Kalispell, and 24 miles N of Thompson Falls, MT (Northwestern Land Office, Montana DNRC). Bennett's Type 1 IMT is in command. Size is **82,161 acres with 30% containment**. Personnel assigned: **589**. Numerous homes remain threatened. Evacuations and Area Closures remain in effect.

Black Cat – is located between Highway 93 and Mill Creek, approximately 2 miles SW of Evaro, Montana. The fire is estimated at **350 acres, with 0% containment**. Approximately **50 personnel** are assigned. Reid's Type 3 IC will transition into a Type 1 organization. The Missoula County Sheriff's Office issued a mandatory evacuation order for residents on the west side of Highway 93 North -- south of Bear Grass Mountain Road and North of O'Keefe. Highway 93 North is open to both north and southbound traffic.

Sawmill Complex is located on the Lolo NF, approximately 22 miles SE of Missoula. The complex includes a total of **34,898 acres with 20% containment** reported. The complex consists of the Sawmill Creek (**5,55 ac**), the Wyman #2 (**24,843 ac**), and the Fisher Point (**4,800 ac**) fires. McNitt's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: **464**. Numerous residences and other structures remain threatened. Use Restrictions and Road Closures are in effect within the Rock Creek drainage.

W-H Complex – This complex is composed of two fires previously reported as the Wicked Creek Fire (**19,600 ac**) and the Hicks Park Fire (**1,400 ac**). These fires are located 27 miles S of Livingston, and 10 miles SE of Emigrant, MT. Total size of the complex is estimated at **21,100 acres with 5% containment**. Stanich's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Personnel Assigned: **155**. Structures are threatened, and evacuations are in place. Three Area Closures are in effect.

Brush Creek is located on the Flathead NF, twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Brush Creek is **26,628 acres with 75% containment**. Koehler's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: **595**. Residences and outbuildings remain threatened. Good Creek community may be evacuated if the fire grows.

Powder River Complex (10 fires) is thirty five miles southeast of Ashland. Johnson's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: **176**. The complex is **23,113 acres with 30% containment**. Structures are threatened (2 structures have burned). Fires continue to exhibit extreme behavior.

Fool Creek on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests, approximately 30 miles NW of Choteau. Fire is now **42,614 acres with 0% containment**. Personnel assigned: **125**.

* Whitney's Type 1 Team (* also managing the Ahorn Fire), is in command. Several outbuildings, including a ski resort remain threaten (6 outbuildings have burned). Evacuations and road closures remain in effect.

Rat Creek is located on the Beaverhead/Deerlodge NF, twenty-five miles west of Wisdom, MT. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Pattengail Creek Fire) is assigned. The fire is now **12,000 acres and is 0% contained**. Personnel assigned: **70**. Structures are threatened. Park buildings, infrastructure, and cultural resources in the Big Hole National Battlefield are threatened. A closure of the Tie Creek and Placer Creek road systems is in effect. Highway 43 could be impacted.

Skyland is located on the Flathead NF near Summit. Pendleton's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Fire is **40,704 acres with 60% containment**. Personnel assigned: **720**. Two structures are confirmed lost, numerous residences remain threatened. Evacuations are in effect for areas between Two Medicine Creek and Little Badger (Blackfeet Reservation). NW flank of the fire was tested by easterly winds yesterday.

Rombo Mountain is located in the Bitterroot NF. The fire is located eighteen miles south of Darby, MT. Svalberg's Fire Use Management Team is assigned. Estimated size is **8,560 acres with 0% containment**. Personnel assigned: **174**. Today, in addition to managing the Rombo Mountain Fire, the team will assume management of the Bitterroot Fire Use Complex (16 Wildland Fire Use fires encompassing approximately 9,000 acres). Some residences, Painted Rocks State Park and other commercial property remain threatened. Precautionary evacuation notices (stage 1) have been issued. Area closures remain in effect for areas around Rombo Mountain and W of West Fork Road.

Ahorn Fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is being managed by * Whitney's Type 1 Team (* also managing the Fool Creek Fire). Current size is estimated at **46,500 acres and is 6% contained**. Personnel Assigned: **270**. Residences and guest ranches in the Benchmark, Gibson, and Sun Canyon areas remain threatened.

Meriwether located on the Helena National Forest in and around the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Carpenter's Type 3 organization is now in command. Current size is estimated at **42,438 acres with 75% containment**. Personnel Assigned: **193**. No structures are currently threatened, but 8 outbuildings have been destroyed.

* **Signal Rock 07** – is located approximately 23 miles WSW of Phillipsburg, MT on the Beaverhead – Deerlodge National Forest. The fire is estimated at **600 acres with 0% containment**. Lambert's Type 3 organization is assigned; with **3** personnel. No structures are threatened

Conger Creek on the Lolo National Forest, 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is **9,800 acres with 0% containment**. Doehring (Type 3 IC) is assigned with **7** personnel. 13 outbuildings are threatened.

Pattengail Creek on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is **8,000 acres and 0% contained**. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Rat Creek Fire) is assigned; with **34** personnel. No structures threatened.

Pine Crest Fire is located approximately seven miles SE of Columbus, MT (Southern Land Office, DNRC). The **149 acre** fire is now **90% contained**. Cogwer's Type 3 incident organization is in command. Personnel assigned: 19. No structures are currently threatened. The evacuation order for homes in the Pine Crest subdivision has been lifted.

Lost Creek Fire is located on the Crow Reservation, approximately 6 miles SE of Pryor, MT. The fire is currently **149 acres, with 90% containment**. Alluisi's Type 3 incident management organization is in place. Personnel assigned: **192**. No structures are threatened. Some resources are being demobilized.

*** NEW FIRES (Emerging Extended Attack Fires over 100 acres in size)**

III. Weather

Red Flag Warnings or Fire Weather Watches:

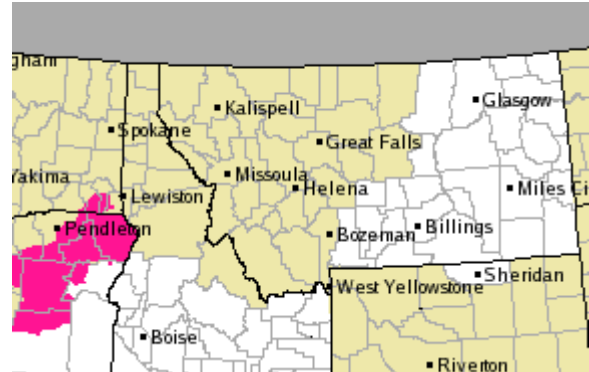
There are no current Red Flag Warnings or Fire Weather Watches for Montana.

Today the National Weather Service has issued hazardous weather outlooks for portions of Northwest Montana, West Central Montana, Central Montana, North Central Montana and Southwest Montana.

Today and tonight

Smoke from wildfires will continue to settle into many of the populated valleys creating poor air quality and limiting visibilities today and tonight.

Both visibility and air quality will be reduced at times...especially in the valleys of southwest Montana. People with respiratory problems or who are otherwise sensitive to the smoke should limit exposure to it as much as possible.



Friday through Wednesday

Areas of smoke will continue into Friday and possibly beyond. The air mass will become increasingly unstable near the Continental Divide both Friday and Saturday afternoons...creating the possibility of strong thunderstorms.

A cold front will move through the region Sunday...bringing gusty westerly winds to the region Sunday afternoon through Monday... especially along the rocky mountain front.

Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours. <http://www.weather.gov/>

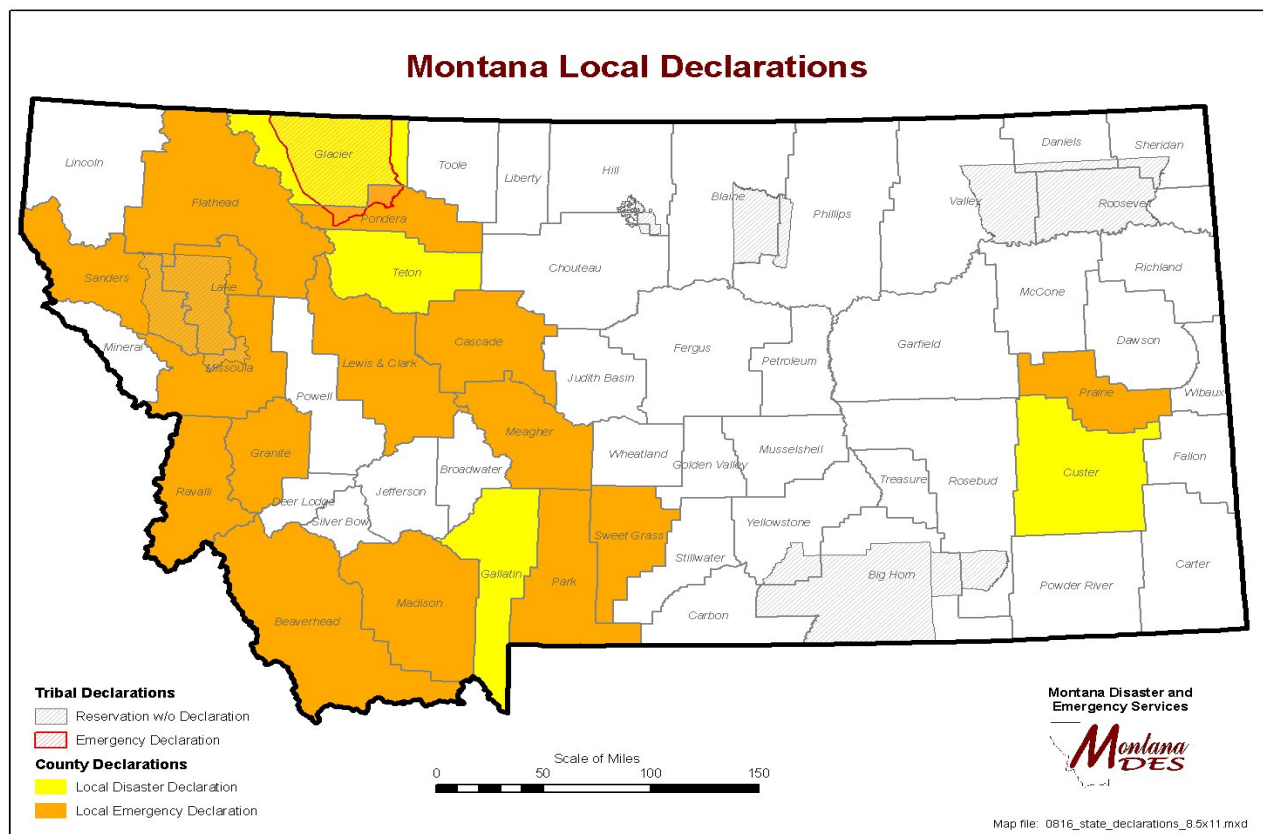
Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. Local and Tribal Declarations



- **State of Emergency.** The following jurisdictions have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark
Lake
Cascade
Flathead
Prairie
Pondera
Sweet Grass
Madison

Ravalli
Granite
Missoula
Sanders
Beaverhead
Blackfeet Nation
Park
Meagher

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following jurisdictions have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton
Glacier

Gallatin
Custer

VI. Jurisdictional Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.
- The Flathead County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Teton County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Missoula County Emergency Operations Center is activated. Missoula County has a call center in place for public information. The phone number is 406-258-3680.
- The Granite County Emergency Operations Center has been activated.
- The Sanders County Emergency Operations Center is activated but mobile in the area of the Chippy Creek Fire.
- The Sweet Grass County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/12/07.
- The Powder River County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/14/07.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Fire Management Assistance Grants

- Jocko Lakes FEMA-2718FM-MT approved 8/4/07

IX. Emergency Management Assistance Compact Resources Committed

- EMAC A Team is assigned to the MT State Emergency Coordination Center.
- Two HEMTT aviation refuelers from Colorado National Guard are in Helena to support the Montana Army National Guard.

X. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- MT-DES deployed an Agency Representative to Stillwater County to assist with the Pine Crest Fire.

- Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk modules have been deployed for initial attack to:
 - Kalispell
 - Missoula
 - Helena
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist with fire support on the Meriwether Fire.
- Montana National Guard Security Teams have been assigned to:
 - Meriwether Fire
 - Sawmill Complex
 - Jocko Lake (2 teams)
 - Fool Creek Fire
- Montana Highway Patrol resources are assigned (as requested) to assist in traffic control and law enforcement support of large fires.
- Starting on July 20, 2007, at 0700 the SECC was staffed and activated to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900), seven days a week. The SECC remains at Level III. Outside of those hours, the MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.